

Gospel of Matthew

.....



Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 13:1-58

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. In Judges 9:1-57, after Abimelech has killed 70 sons of Jerubbaal and made himself king, Jotham, the youngest son and only survivor, addresses the people of Shechem and tells a parable about a bramble (representing Abimelech) who was made “king of the trees” after other, worthier trees (the other sons of Jerubbaal) were passed over. In 2 Samuel 12:1-25, the prophet Nathan tells King David a parable about a rich man who stole and slaughtered a poor man’s only lamb. King David, not realizing that he is being told a parable, declares: “The man who has done this deserves to die!” Nathan then tells the king: “You are the man!” and then spells out David’s sins of adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah the Hittite. Both of these Old Testament parables were told in situations where the leadership had become corrupt. After the Jewish religious leaders harden their hearts against Jesus and accuse him of being possessed by “the prince of demons,” Jesus begins to obscure his message by delivering it in the form of parables.
2. The glossary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines infallibility as: “The gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church whereby the pastors of the Church, the pope and bishops in union with him, can definitively proclaim a doctrine of faith or morals for the belief of the faithful. This gift is related to the inability of the whole body of the faithful to err in matters of faith and morals” Paragraphs 891 and 892 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explain the forms this charism of infallibility takes—when the pope “proclaims by definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals,” when the pope and the bishops “exercise the supreme Magisterium, above all in an Ecumenical Council,” and “[d]ivine assistance is also given . . . when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a ‘definitive manner,’ they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals.”
3. In Isaiah 6:8-10, the prophet records: “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me.’ And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: “Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.” Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”” By quoting from this passage when he begins explaining his parables to his disciples, Jesus implies that the Jewish religious leaders of his time are unable to see, to hear, or to understand because corruption has blinded them, deafened them, and made them otherwise incapable of understanding.

Matthew Lesson 13 Suggested Responses

4. In Matthew 13:18-23, Jesus teaches that one's response to the word of God depends on how it's received. The word of God fails to take root in those who lack understanding, are unable to persevere in times of tribulation and persecution, or are overcome by the "cares of the world and the delight in riches."
5. Jeremiah 17:10 describes fruit as one's actions: "the fruit of his doings." In John 15:5, Jesus teaches: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." In paragraph 1832 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* the tradition of the Church lists twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity."
6. Jesus' parables about hidden things all point to the Church.
7. In Matthew 13:36, the house symbolizes the Church. Just as Jesus explained the meaning of his parables while in a house, it's only within the Church that the mystery of Jesus can even begin to be understood.
8. In Matthew 13:2-35, Jesus speaks from a boat, which also is symbol of the sacrament of Baptism. In 1 Peter 3:18-22, St. Peter writes that people are brought to God by the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ through the waters of Baptism prefigured by Noah and his family who were saved in the ark.
9. Paragraph 546 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "Through his parables he [Jesus] invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough; deeds are required. . . . One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven."
10. Paragraph 500 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, 'brothers of Jesus,' are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls 'the other Mary.' They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression."

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.